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BEN BARKA (SCHEDULED)

BY MICHAEL REUPKE

PARIS, FEB. 11 (REUTERS) - THE BEN BARKA SCANDAL, WHICH HAS SHAKEN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, APPROACHED A CLIMAX TODAY AS JUDGE LOUIS ZOLLINGER PREPARED TO WIND UP HIS PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF THE CASE.

MENDI BEN BARKA, LEADER OF MOROCCO'S LEFT-WING OPPOSITION GROUP, WAS ABDUCTED ON A PARIS BOULEVARD LAST OCTOBER, REPORTERLY WITH THE CONNIVANCE OF SOME FRENCH SECURITY AGENTS. NOTHING HAS BEEN HEARD OF HIM SINCE, AND HE IS PRESUMED TO BE DEAD.

JUDGE ZOLLINGER SCHEDULED FINALE INTERVIEWS TODAY WITH SIX MEN CHARGED IN CONNECTION WITH THE KIDNAPING. JUSTICE SOURCES SAID IT COULD BE EXPECTED THE CASE WOULD THEN BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL, THOUGH NO DATE HAS BEEN SET.

THE SIXTH MAN, ARRESTED LAST NIGHT, IS ONE OF FRANCE'S SENIOR COUNTER-ESPIONAGE OFFICIALS -- MARCEL LEROY, WHOSE CODE NAME IS FILVILLE.

JUSTICE SOURCES SAID LEROY WAS CHARGED WITH FAILING TO REPORT A CRIME. EARLIER THIS WEEK LEROY ADMITTED HE KNEW ABOUT THE PLAN TO KIDNAP BEN BARKA BUT DID NOTHING TO PREVENT IT.

LEROY WAS SUSPENDED FROM THE COUNTER-ESPIONAGE SERVICE LAST MONTH. ANTOINE LOPEZ, A COUNTER-ESPIONAGE AGENT WHO HAS ADMITTED HE TOOK PART IN THE KIDNAPING, HAS SAID HE WAS WORKING UNDER LEROY'S ORDERS.

THE FOUR OTHERS IN CUSTODY INCLUDE TWO MEMBERS OF FRANCE'S NARCOTICS SQUAD.

THE POLITICAL CONTROVERSY THAT HAS SURROUNDED THE CASE WAS SUPPLIED WITH ADDITIONAL FUEL YESTERDAY BY FRANCOIS MITTERRAND, THE LEFT-WING CANDIDATE WHO RAN SECOND TO CHARLES DE GAULLE IN DECEMBER'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

MITTERRAND DECLARED AT A PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS TRYING TO HUSH UP THE CASE.

"THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURITY SERVICES COULD HAVE PREVENTED BEN BARKA'S KIDNAPING," HE SAID. "THEY COULD ALSO HAVE PREVENTED HIS MURDER, BECAUSE THE WHOLE TRUTH COULD HAVE BEEN KNOWN AS EARLY AS NOV. 3." BEN BARKA WAS ABDUCTED OCT. 29.

MITTERRAND ADDED:

"THE GOVERNMENT'S SILENCE IS EXPLAINED BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF GENERAL DE GAULLE'S CANDIDATURE FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION MADE ON NOV. 4.

"THE DETERMINATION TO HUSH UP THE AFFAIR WAS IN LINE WITH THE REGIME'S POLITICAL INTERESTS."

GRB 5:27A

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